Standards for Professional Learning

The Background:

Professional learning is an essential part of effective organizations. Successful organizations are those in which continuous learning and improvement take place. In successful schools, principals and teachers engage in continuous learning and improvement in order to enhance the learning of their students. The challenge to policymakers and educators is to create conditions conducive to student and educator learning in each school.

A professional development policy was first adopted by the State Board in 1992 and revised in 2002 (SBE Policy 5.200). Both the original policy and the subsequent revisions endorsed the standards developed and then revised by the National Staff Development Council (NSDC). In 2010 NSDC changed its name to Learning Forward and standards for professional learning were revised again in 2011.

These standards call for a new form of educator learning. The decision to call these Standards for Professional Learning rather than Standards for Professional Development signals the importance of educators taking an active role in their continuous improvement and places emphasis on the learning. By making learning the focus, those who are responsible for professional learning will concentrate their efforts on assuring that learning for educators leads to learning for students. For too long, practices associated with professional development have treated educators as individual, passive recipients of information, and school systems have expected little or no change in practice.

In November, 2011 representatives from Learning Forward Tennessee, Tennessee School Boards Association, Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, Department of Education, State Board of Education, Tennessee Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, Tennessee ASCD, Tennessee School Boards Association, SCORE and other professional organizations convened to review the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). There was unanimous consent among all the organizations represented to work toward statewide adoption and implementation of the standards.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends adoption of the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011) on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.

Standards for Professional Learning

The Standards for Professional Learning are the essential elements of professional learning that function in synergy to enable educators to increase their effectiveness and student learning. All elements are essential to realize the full potential of educator professional learning. The Standards for Professional Learning describe the attributes of effective professional learning to guide the decisions and practices of all persons with the responsibility to fund, regulate, manage, conceive, organize, implement, and evaluate professional learning.

Implicit in the standards are several prerequisites for effective professional learning. They are so fundamental that the standards do not identify or describe them. These prerequisites reside where professional learning intersects with professional ethics:

- Educators' commitment to students, *all* students, is the foundation of effective professional learning.
- Each educator involved in professional learning comes to the experience ready to learn.
- Because there are disparate experience levels, and use of practice among educators, professional learning can foster collaborative inquiry and learning that enhances individual and collective performance.
- Like all learners, educators learn in different ways and at different rates.

Standards for Professional Learning

LEARNING COMMUNITIES: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.

LEADERSHIP: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.

RESOURCES: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.

DATA: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

LEARNING DESIGNS: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.

OUTCOMES: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.